

it very difficult to find him home care. I continue to hear stories from seniors in my district who have had to give up their homes simply to stay in a nursing home.

Again, we can do better. That is why the Build Back Better Act will provide a historic investment in home care in order to help the more than 800,000 people on State Medicaid waiting lists.

Mr. Speaker, when we pass this bill, more of our people will stop struggling to make ends meet and start experiencing true financial security.

When we pass this bill, more of our children and our seniors will receive the care they deserve. And, most importantly, when we pass this bill we will be one giant step closer to an America where everyone has the chance to pursue the American Dream and the means to support their families.

OPTIONS OVER TERMINATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NEWHOUSE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it, we are in a time of crisis largely fueled by the Democratic Party and President Biden's policies. Store shelves are increasingly empty, the cost of basic goods is soaring, supply chains are failing, ports are backlogged, and government restrictions on domestic energy have driven the price of gasoline to 7-year highs. Who is it that foots the bill for these progressive policies? I will tell you, it is hardworking American families.

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Rather than address the underlying causes of scarcity by bolstering American production and enhancing our Nation's energy independence, the Biden administration has worsened the situation with their dictatorial policies and mandates, most recently in the form of an executive order requiring all Federal employees and contractors be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by November 22 and December 8, respectively.

The alternative? Termination.

This mandate goes too far and has become a model for Democratic Governors across the country—including my own State of Washington's Governor Inslee—who are using it to justify their own drastic actions and impose similar State-level mandates.

Now, in addition to the hundreds of State emergency personnel who are already out of work, threatening the safety of our communities, central Washington also has hundreds of Federal workers and contractors who are facing termination.

American businesses have been struggling enough to find workers, fill production shifts, and deliver goods. President Biden's one-size-fits-all vaccine mandate will further hammer our small businesses, driving up prices,

slowing down deliveries, and exacerbating supply chain problems.

First responders and frontline healthcare workers are also being fired for not complying with COVID-19 vaccine mandates. In the State of Washington, we have seen hundreds of our brave law enforcement officers forced to choose between vaccination and doing their jobs. Leaving our communities, which are facing rising crime rates, unprotected is not going to increase anyone's safety.

Hospitals and health clinics are experiencing staffing shortages as well. The remaining employees are then overworked to compensate, leading to burnout and increased staff turnover. Leaving our hospitals understaffed is not going to help our communities overcome this public health crisis.

President Biden's deadline for the vaccine mandate brushes right up against the peak holiday season. Since cargo distribution companies are already battling unprecedented labor shortages, this mandate is likely to wreak havoc on the global supply chain when it is stressed the most, during the holidays. Leaving our tables empty and the space under our Christmas trees bare is not going to improve morale.

But why is President Biden perpetuating a permanent state of emergency? The only answer that comes to mind is that he is more concerned about expanding governmental control than the safety and stability of our workforce or the protection of our individual rights.

Not only does this mandate go against our inalienable rights protected in the Constitution, but it ignores the fact that natural immunity also provides protection against infection from the virus. In fact, other countries have adopted policies upholding this as a valid, science-based exemption from vaccine requirements. The mandate also doesn't allow workers to opt out through frequent COVID testing, as many private businesses have chosen to do.

Federal employees who have opted not to receive the vaccine because they have natural immunity developed after recovering from the virus do not deserve to be fired, especially when those same men and women have worked tirelessly to keep our communities safe and healthy before there was even a vaccine available. These men and women, who have been on the front lines since the beginning of the pandemic and risking their families' health and safety to ensure our Federal and State projects continued and that our communities remained protected, deserve our respect, not our condemnation.

But the President has doubled down on his policies, stating that he absolutely thinks police officers and emergency responders should be fired if they do not comply with this mandate.

That is why I introduced the Options Over Terminations Act. This legislation would provide an exemption to the

Federal COVID-19 mandate for any Federal employee or contractor who provides proof of COVID-19 antibodies.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support my legislation and provide our workers with a smart, science-based alternative to President Biden's vaccine mandate.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF DISASTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, over this past week, it has been heartening to see the climate pledges and vows coming out of Glasgow. Our success in Glasgow, however, will not come from voluntary pledges and vows. It must include specific, effective steps that can be put in place now to begin making a difference.

I have worked on the climate issue since 1991 when I was a member of the city council that enacted the Nation's first carbon commitments which we have met over those years. But the cascade of recent extraordinary weather events has made it clear—as if we needed further reminders—that we are entering a new era in terms of impact and public awareness of climate disasters.

The Oregon experience has been searing. We had the worst air quality in the world last year due to extreme forest fires. And in my district when we set an all-time heat record of 116 degrees this summer after setting two other previous all-time highs, we recorded temperatures of 180 degrees in the heart of my district. No wonder hundreds of people died.

Working on these issues for years, we have had some successes, but we can no longer afford to be nibbling around the edges. We need bold, transformative action to meet the scale of this problem. We must continue to fight to reduce emissions and improve our resilience by passing the Build Back Better Act and the bipartisan infrastructure bill together.

But as we undertake that enormous effort, we must also undertake the massive issues of community preparedness, resilience, and risk mitigation. We can start with some of the basics: stop allowing new development in risky places like the fire zone, the urban-rural interface, or areas with high flood risk. We must deal with repetitive flood loss in a more thoughtful way, including paying to remove properties and people to ensure that the vulnerable aren't stranded in high-risk areas.

We must enhance the protections of the Stafford Act and help FEMA address the challenges of today's climate. FEMA does not actually have a mandate to deal with the extreme heat like we had in Portland that was killing people. We must empower cities and States to be both proactive and realistic in their approaches to planning,